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DE NOTES\Explaining Almost Everything

Background forces

From almost the onset of the air age, there has been a powerful synergy—a convergence of interests, plans and efforts (including lobbying of the executive branch and Congress)—between the US Air Force, the aircraft industry, and the commercial airline industry.

Each of these wanted and needed the U.S. government and Congress to fund a large American air force, and in particular, a large and continuously “modernizing” fleet of large, long-range bombers.

Air Force “doctrine” called for the US to have air superiority, “command of the air,” in any future conflict: the ability early in any conflict to operate in any airspace relatively freely, without being jeopardized by fighters, anti-aircraft artillery (or later, missiles), or attacks on its own bases and communications.

This required having the best available aircraft and electronics, superior to that of any adversary, constantly improving.

That called for a large and innovating Research & Development industry. But that would be subsidized by the government at a high level only to support a **large** air force.

Within the U.S. Army Air Corps, strategic bombing forces became dominant from early on in WWII (having been frustrated prior to that in pursuing the hopes of early advocates of “Victory through Air Power,” like Douhet, Billy Mitchell and Alexander Seversky).

That dominant part of the Air Corps wanted large, heavy (bombload), long-range bombers to support their claims of being able to play a crucial, or as they thought wholly decisive role in any future large war.

Promoters of commercial airlines wanted the aircraft industry to produce the same sort of planes for commercial flights. To make the costs acceptable, they needed the aircraft industry to develop large production facilities and long production lines. The commercial industry itself couldn’t induce this; only a government-subsidized program of large bombing planes could do that.

That required an independent Air Force, free of budgetary, strategic and operational control by the Army, which was a competitor for budget funds, especially outside hot war, and which wanted mainly from the U.S. Army Air Corps smaller planes for close air support of ground troops and relatively short-range attacks on enemy logistics.

It also required the Soviet Union as the prospective adversary. Only the SU had enough targets—among plausible postwar enemies, which no longer included Germany or Japan—to make a large fleet of bombers necessary: especially with atomic and then thermonuclear weapons! And only the Soviets could fund a large R&D industry that could give the US aircraft a race, requiring the constant modernization that required a large US R&D industry that was needed both for air superiority against all enemies and for the commercial aircraft industry.

Thus, the US Air Force, the aircraft/aerospace/electronics industry, and commercial airline industry all needed for their health and expansion a postwar Cold War against the Soviet Union.

Once the Air Force did become independent and SAC grew into a large force of heavy bombers, there developed additional constituencies that had a stake in its remaining large: voters (and unions) whose jobs and local economies depended on military aircraft production; Congresspersons who wanted their votes, and contributions from the industry; presidential candidates, likewise.

All of these, in their lobbying and campaign efforts, amounted to special interests with a major influence on “defense” policy, like in their own spheres, the oil and coal lobbies, the gun lobby, the Israel lobby, insurance, pharmaceuticals, bankers, Wall St....

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What I'm addressing here is the question that has troubled me for fifty years: How did the Doomsday Machine come to be built, by American humans, by an American government; and maintained and "modernized" by successive administrations, funded by Congress and taxpayers?

For the last twenty years, an equally vexing question: How has this persisted even after the end of the Cold War and the existence of a highly armed superpower adversary; and after the discovery and confirmation of nuclear winter, revealing the nature of both strategic forces as not merely as multi-genocidal but as potential Doomsday Machines?

These apparently decisive changes in the strategic context virtually coincided in time, yet in the twenty years since the two Machines have been maintained with no significant change, in the absence of any strategic rationale whatsoever.

Since each kept on alert vastly more warheads than were needed to cause nuclear winter, with thousands more in ready reserve, the mutual reductions made so far have in no way changed their status as Doomsday Machines: nor their proneness to detonation by a false alarm, by unauthorized action or accident. How can this be?

What are the forces and perceptions that have led to this? What do they say about our species (and our societies: but surely not only ours)? Can—as a practical, political, psychological matter-- the societies and the species that produced these Machines mobilize the creativity and will and efforts to dismantle them? What are the obstacles to change, what has produced this fifty-year homeostasis of global destructive capacity? Can they be overcome, by "us," in time: before the Machines explode, or the resistance to dismantlement becomes even greater? How? By whom, doing what?

The earliest proponents of strategic bombing (aimed at population and industry in the homeland of the adversary)—Giulio Douhet in particular—emphasized the importance of getting in the first blow. But that was based considerably on an overestimation of the effects of that blow, at that time: the destruction that a given number of bombs would cause to population, the panic and dissolution of society that the destruction would bring about, and the inability of defenses (antiaircraft and fighters) to limit the destruction. All these overestimates contributed to an exaggerated view of the effectiveness of strategic bombing among its advocates, even after first blows had been struck: which did not, after all, prove decisive (witness the London Blitz).

Toward the end of World War II, it looked possible that the verdict on strategic bombing would be that it was a vast waste of resources, compared to its actual effects on shortening the war in Germany. Even in Japan, the death and destruction inflicted by the great fire raid on Tokyo on March 9, 1945—which could hardly have been greater if an atomic bomb had been available then and had been dropped instead—had no perceptible effects on Japanese resistance in Iwo Jima and Okinawa nor did it change the surrender terms we had been monitoring since December. (Neither did the near-destruction of the next sixty-four Japanese cities, though atomic bombs would have raised the scale of devastation of some of them up to the Tokyo level).

An atomic bomb could wreak the destruction that it took three hundred bombers with firebombs and high explosives to inflict. But we had three hundred bombers, and more, and we used them successively on the next sixty-four Japanese cities in population terms, killing some nine hundred thousand Japanese civilians before Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All of these together, we now know, and the last two in addition, failed to change the positions on surrender terms of any of the members of the War Cabinet.

The intervention by the Emperor to break the deadlock—contemplated by him earlier—came only upon the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, on August 8. That event led the Japanese to offer terms to the Americans directly for the first time, after giving up their hopes that the Russians would act favorably as mediators for them to achieve terms which the Americans were, in fact, prepared to grant (maintenance of the Emperor): after they had demonstrated the Bombs. (Virtually all American officials except for Byrnes and Truman had proposed offering these terms before the Bombs were dropped).

Whether or not the Bombs had contributed to the shortening of the war (at all), the impression that they had was indelible, in the minds of the American public, unaware that our high officials had been monitoring Japanese diplomatic cables in their pursuit of surrender terms for months. (Ignorant of this, American troops, like the public, were observing only the Japanese fight to the death on Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and our preparations for invading Japan, not knowing that on the basis of their secret intelligence the top American officials had come to regard that invasion as almost surely unnecessary by May, quite apart from the Bombs.)

Thus the worries of the Air Force about achieving its independent status, pursuing the role of strategic bombing, and attaining a large (“Sixty Group”) air fleet of heavy

bombers—three aims, closely intertwined—were over. Eisenhower had noted earlier that the devastation of Tokyo had achieved nothing, militarily or diplomatically (and had protested the use of the “awful” A-bombs to Stimson and Truman, as unnecessary and wrong). Hap Arnold and LeMay shared his opinion that the Bombs were unnecessary, but that was because they thought that the firebombing was sufficient and would surely produce surrender without invasion by the fall, when they would have completed the destruction of the cities and run out of targets. (Actually, the naval blockade, cutting off oil and other imports, seems to have been the decisive factor in bringing the War Cabinet to proposing surrender, on steadily worsening terms.)

Be that as it may, the conclusion they drew about how to win a war, and the crucial role of strategic bombing by the Air Force in that, was essentially that of Douhet after all, with atomic bombs bringing that doctrine to fruition. The war would be won by destroying cities. The B-29 had been built to do just that, and firebombs had been up to the job, with enough bombers: they would have won the war, LeMay was sure, without the atom bombs, given a few more months.

As General LeMay once said to my RAND colleague Sam Cohen (as Cohen told me): “Sam, war is killing people. When you kill enough people, the other guy quits.”

A problem, though, was to justify a large Air Force when a single B-29 could now do the job of three hundred to a thousand (the last raid of the war, after Nagasaki) a month earlier. Only one prospective opponent had enough cities and dispersed industry and military targets to require a **lot** of long-range bombers armed with atomic bombs.

That country was our wartime ally. (But then, Japan had been our ally in World War I. Ever after the Tokyo earthquake and fire in 1923, General Billy Mitchell had the vision of building an Air Force bomber fleet that could have the same effect, precisely on Tokyo with its “paper houses.” His dream was realized.)

Fortunately for the Air Force, our postwar alliance with the Communist-led Soviet Union was fragile. As early as the summer of 1944, physicist Joseph Rotblat in the Manhattan Project heard at dinner from General Groves, in charge of the project, that the atomic bomb they were working on was primarily to confront the Soviet Union after the war.ⁱ

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(A lot of thoughts from yesterday, leading up to the proposition:

From the point of view of SAC, a *false alarm* leading to a preemptive attack on the Soviet Union would be a *better* basis for executing the SIOP—in terms of its likely outcome—than US preemption based on true tactical warning of an imminent or ongoing Soviet attack.

In fact, of all the circumstances in which general war might come about, a false alarm leading to preemption in a period of relative calm between the two countries would be **best**. It would not only be launched before any Soviet planes had taken off from their bases (or been deployed to forward bases) or missiles fired, but it would find them in a non-alert state, unready to respond to tactical warning of their own.

(We didn't know about the Dead Hand during the Cold War, but if it depended on being switched on during a crisis, then a US attack based on a false alarm in a non-crisis period could decapitate Soviet leadership and command without triggering an automatic response.)

Tuesday, September 6, 2011

This thought—that a false alarm FS (first-strike) wouldn't be the worst thing in the world, in fact, it might be the **best** thing that could happen—the Final Solution to the Communist problem, **as promising as a preventive war** which the civilian leadership forbade to LeMay—may well be related to the institutional and psychological setting in which a Type II error—failure to execute the SIOP when it was “appropriate” (in the eyes of the military)—was treated as much less serious, less reliably to be avoided, than a Type I error: executing the SIOP when it was *not* appropriate (in the eyes of the president, say, when the US was not in fact under attack or about to be attacked.

In effect, a Type I “error” would be a way, perhaps the only way, for CINCSAC to get what amounted to a preventive war (a surprise attack on Soviet forces when they were non-alert, not preparing to attack or be attacked) out of a president. That would almost surely be more promising in results—in limiting Soviet damage to the US and in

achieving “victory”—than an attack that was truly preemptive, one launched on tactical warning of a Soviet attack that was actually taking place or about to.

The latter couldn’t hope to stop or destroy most, if any, of the Soviet vehicles that had already taken off, the other bombers would be dispersed to forward operating bases and the remaining missiles and bombers would be preparing to go and could be launched quickly on Soviet tactical warning. Submarines would be at sea, whereas an attack launched on a false alarm (not in a crisis) could find them in port.

A problem with this picture is that a false alarm is unlikely to be credible enough to a president to get him to execute the SIOP when it comes in a period of real calm, lack of conflict or crisis, appearing to signal a Soviet attack “out of the blue.” That possibility (though it preoccupied RAND analysts) was deemed very unlikely, even by the JCS in the JSCP. (Of course, there was the possibility that an attack was occurring, in a non-crisis period, because the *Soviets* were responding to a false alarm, or an unauthorized action.)

Still, evidence of it would be treated skeptically, (so much so as to raise doubts that the system really would respond in time to a real Soviet surprise attack: that was one of the points of the RAND analyses). This situation actually occurred a number of times, on both sides. The warning system did generate false warnings—to some degree, even frequently—and there was enough skepticism to delay a response (by minutes!) with the error being discovered in time, or to avert a response altogether, even though the evidence seemed compelling.

[At some point, discuss the major warning errors, in the US—see the Hart report, and Scott Sagan—and in the SU. In fact, this takes a major account.]

A false alarm is more likely to be responded to (believed enough to warrant preemption) when it does come during a crisis or conflict, when an enemy attack seems more possible than usual. (Thus, Reagan’s rhetoric and buildup made Andropov highly worried about a US surprise attack; he put Soviet intelligence systems on high alert, i.e. looking not only for electronic warning but for evidence of all kinds that an attack might be planned or underway. In that state, a NATO exercise caused great alarm; and false electronic signals at that time would have been taken very seriously. But various such events also occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis: see Sagan.)

And in that situation, a preemptive attack would be less effective. Though the Soviets might not actually be attacking (i.e., the alarm was false), they might be on unusually high alert. On the other hand, during the Cuban Missile Crisis (a period of very great American superiority, not reproduced later) the Soviets rather conspicuously (under known US surveillance) did **not** go on alert: presumably, precisely because they did not want to generate false evidence to the Americans that they might be preparing to attack.

[Another case: Nixon did go on high alert, deliberately in a way that would be perceived by the Soviets, when he was making nuclear threats against North Vietnam in October

and November, 1969, his “November ultimatum.” Presumably this was to warn the Soviets and North Vietnamese that he was about to carry out his threats, and that he was prepared for, and warning the Soviets against, any Soviet nuclear response, in Southeast Asia or otherwise. The Soviets should not be tempted to attack the US (which they would hardly be inclined to do, in any case), since SAC was on alert; and they should not be tempted to respond at all with nuclear weapons (say, against US bases or a submarine attack on a US carrier), lest they trigger a full attack on the SU, for which SAC was ready. The latter, by 1969, would have been blatantly mad; but then, Nixon was executing his “madman strategy” precisely at that time. (Quote Haldeman)

Of course, a Soviet nuclear response to a US use of tactical nuclear weapons against North Vietnam (for which Nixon had operational plans prepared at the time) was highly unlikely. Both sides knew that, and knew that the other knew it. But the demonstration that Nixon was preparing for all contingencies, even unlikely ones, was meant to lend credibility to his threats, and probably did. Yet they did not succeed.]

LeMay, head of SAC, then Vice Chief and then Chief of Staff of the Air Force (the latter during the Berlin and Cuban Crises, and the early stages of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam) did, by many accounts, believe in the desirability of a preventive war against the Soviet Union, believing he could win it decisively.

But Eisenhower rejected that option for the US in 1953—after asking that it be studied (in the “Solarium” studies)—and the only likely way to get a first-strike executed against the SU—**which was what LeMay and his successor Power designed the Strategic Air Command to do**—was in the form of a preemptive attack—triggered by warning of attack which was either true or (more commonly) false—or else by a Soviet attack somewhere that could either be interpreted, in part, as strategic warning of a Soviet attack arising out of escalation, or as so great a challenge that it “called” for an all-out response. (An example of the latter: Soviet tactical nuclear weapons against a US force invading Cuba: a possibility hours away on Saturday, October 27, 1962, though even LeMay didn’t foresee it.)

The other ways to “achieve” the SAC-desired FS against the SU were a) preemption; b) escalation from a Soviet “provocation” (the USAF favored Ike’s broad concept of “adequate provocation”: any conflict between Soviet forces and American). Since the best form of preemption would be on the basis of a false alarm, the chances of having such a false warning (which in some form or other, was as frequent as streetcars: as McGeorge Bundy said of “Pleikus”) result in a US “preemptive” attack was to delegate the decision to many subordinate commanders, or to automate it (as General Kuter told Herb York he wanted to do).

I am suggesting—the “paranoid,” “conspiratorial” hypothesis-- that the actual delegation that has always existed, and the actual openings that have been allowed to persist for unauthorized action, have been motivated **not** exclusively to assure second-strike retaliation under attack, **but to provide occasion for a first-strike, under circumstances when the president would not choose it** (if he or she were fully aware of

the real situation) but the military would (even if they knew for certain that no Soviet attack were imminent).

This hypothesis is not dictated or proven simply by the fact of delegation and of gaps in the controls against unauthorized action; or even by their persistence after the gaps have been known and pointed out (see Rubel's effort to "correct" the Minuteman launch system, or the years it took to get PALs on strategic weapons) and the delegation has become less necessary as communications improved.

It's based on my fragmentary knowledge of 1) a considerable gap between the minimum level of circumstances that would lead to a military recommendation to execute the SIOP and what it would take to get this decision from a civilian president and his staff; 2) strong evidence that the military are aware of and concerned about this gap, from frustrating experiences in lesser crises. There's little question that (3) the military have shown great resistance to measures that would constrict the military ability to take action independently of civilian authority in a crisis, including action that the civilian authorities might disapprove. This could follow from (1) and (2).

Or, it could simply mean that the military wanted to protect against loss of communications (this is the explicit reason), or, more covertly, against simply incompetent, foolish actions of the civilians, actions that would really defeat the civilians' purposes, actions that should be regarded as "military" choices that were out of bounds of the civilians for bureaucratic, efficiency reasons. See CNO Anderson's determination to get McNamara out of Flag Plot during the Missile Crisis and "let the Navy run the blockade" without civilian interference.

(On the other hand: DID McNamara ever know, during the crisis, that the Navy was actually dropping depth charges on Soviet submarines, to get them to surface? Would he have allowed it? To prevent it might have led to a near-revolt by the Navy (or not): but it would have prevented the Navy from getting within one Soviet vote (of a subordinate on a sub under "attack") of a nuclear attack. McNamara was **right** not to trust Navy judgment in the nuclear era, based on the "traditions of John Paul Jones.")

What I found in the Pacific (and SAC) was that the commands acted to minimize Type I error—failing to execute the SIOP when appropriate—at the expense of failing to reduce and tolerating a low but still frighteningly high probability of Type II error: executing the SIOP when **not** appropriate.

What I have been coming to, above, is the hypothesis or possibility that **increasing** the possibility of Type II error, or at least, failing to lower it, was a positive aim of the military (or parts of it), a desideratum, a goal in itself (even when this did not reduce the possibility of Type I error). Why? Because a Type II error was **desirable**, the only way to get a civilian authority to authorize a first strike in the absence of a genuine Soviet attack, and **better** in consequences than either waiting for a Soviet attack or responding to a genuine one.

If this were the military perception, to get change in the system, reducing the possibility of a Type II error of attacking when a fully-informed president would not want to, it would not be enough for a civilian consultant (or anyone else) simply to point out this possibility to the top military. I am coming to suspect that they might already know of this possibility and deliberately want it to persist. Of course, the system they had/have might allow the possibility of an “erroneous” execution when even **they**, the top military, not only the civilian president, might think it inappropriate. But they might want to accept this risk to avert a situation where the president could reliably prevent an execute order when they did want it to be implemented.

Whether this is the explanation or not: God knows they did resist such changes, having allowed them to persist for years, and allowing them to persist for decades later. (This applies as well to the Air Force’s insane determination to pursue city-busting, under whatever guise.)

A hypothetical instance of this would be: preferring a communications system subject to outages, complemented by delegation, to a communication system with no or fewer outages, especially one with no delegation.

I can’t say anyone really resisted improving the reliability of communications. But on the other hand, delegation certainly has persisted long after the institution of reliable communications: which could be just bureaucratic inertia, but I suspect strongly reflects the considerations above.

And see the recommendations not only of Goldwater but of the Twining Committee that delegation of tactical weapons—“small, conventional nuclear weapons”—be unconditional for theater commanders such as SACEUR.

The gap described above between the president’s criteria for executing the SIOP and the military’s (not to speak of, the public’s!) is related to a gap between the level of casualties the president and his advisors are prepared to “accept” in the event of an escalatory or preemptive first strike, and what the military—and “military intellectuals,” “civilian militarists”—are prepared to accept.\

See the difference between McGeorge Bundy’s (and Herb York’s, a “defense intellectual” but not a militarist) description of the requirements of deterrence (one to ten to a hundred warheads, and “closer to one than a hundred”), and those of the military (or RAND, or HK, or even AJW, speaking of the Soviets at least).

And there is a related gap in “critical risk” (my concept in my lectures on the Art of Coercion): “how sure” each has to be of an enemy attack before an all-out or nuclear response seems warranted. (LeMay would not need to be sure at all: he had a critical risk of zero. Eisenhower ruled out LeMay’s preventive war, a US attack when not in

armed conflict with the SU. Still, an attack on the US was not required for him, as I believe it would be for most others. Any conventional attack, elsewhere, that involved US troops, was enough.)

Preventive War and Preemption

Given the Air Force doctrine of the importance of getting in the first blow, their orientation toward a first strike and LeMay's desire to enact that, why was a preventive war rejected, especially during the period when the US had a literal or relative monopoly of nuclear weapons?

NOT REALLY BECAUSE:

“We’re too nice”

“It’s not the American way” (though that was stated)

We were deterred by the prospect of

any mass killing of civilians

killing *too many* Russians

killing by fallout too many others: allies, neutrals

Rather, during the period of US monopoly of nuclear weapons, or (in the early Fifties) near-monopoly of strategic capabilities, **we were deterred from preventive war by the likelihood that it would not prevent Soviet occupation of Europe** with their superior conventional forces, as a response to our first-strike.

The Soviet forces were to be deterred from conventional aggression by a combination of a US first strike and their being blocked by European conventional forces. When the Lisbon goals for the latter proved politically unattainable, the Soviet forces were planned to be blocked by US tactical nuclear weapons (whose use would be guaranteed by the presence of US conventional forces), even though this would be at the sacrifice of Europe to nuclear war. (The Europeans don’t seem to have grasped this nature of the threat, entirely, but they counted on deterrence.)

Since the early Fifties, the deterrent to a preventive war for civilian leadership has been the uncertainty that a US first-strike would succeed in totally disarming the SU of its

nuclear weapons. Unlike LeMay, or the JCS as late as 1961 (Berlin), civilian presidents from Eisenhower on have found a significant likelihood of suffering **ten million dead** in the US or well less than that from Soviet nuclear retaliation a sufficient deterrent, for them, to a US preventive war: a US first-strike **not** in the context of ongoing armed conflict with Soviet troops or strong fear of an imminent SU first-strike against the US.

Ever since the early Fifties, the Air Force has faced the challenge of maintaining belief in the efficacy and possible necessity of conducting nuclear strategic bombing against an opponent that has nuclear weapons with which to retaliate. Striking the first blow, a first strike, becomes even more important than before, indeed **necessary** to “winning” and avoiding “unacceptable” damage to the US and its allies: but it is not **sufficient** to guaranteeing these ends. With a sizable SU offensive force, even 90% success in disarming it is not good enough to prevent devastation of the US. And 99% success can’t be achieved with a first strike unless:

1) Soviet forces are totally non-alert and “soft” (and the US achieves total surprise, with no Soviet launch-on-warning); no Soviet subs are at sea or escape detection by our hunter-killer subs;

and 2) decapitation works (no Soviet delegation or automatic Dead Hand; and hunter-killer aircraft-missile-reconnaissance teams can find and eliminate nearly all Soviet missiles that survive initial US volleys);

and 3) a relatively low (compared to pre-attack Soviet capabilities) but historically unprecedented level of damage to the US—ten million dead or more—is “acceptable”;

and 4) Damage to Europe in the scores or hundreds of millions of dead “don’t count.”

(3) and (4) above would require that the alternative to a US first strike would have to pose a probable outcome that would look **even worse** than suffering ten million dead in the US, multiples of that in Europe, and causing even more than that, much more, from fallout in neighboring regions. (This apart from causing up to a hundred million deaths in the Soviet Union).

There actually is one situation in which a “rational” US president could be convinced, on the basis of realistic data and warning, that he or she should “accept” these consequences: what appears to be totally reliable indication that the Soviet Union has irrevocably committed its forces to commencing an all-out attack on the US, and the alternative to strictly “preempting” or conducting “second-strike damage limitation” is the probable deaths of a hundred million Americans or more.

(**Even** in this situation, the feasibility of significant damage limitation, on this order, has been almost non-existent since the mid-Sixties (though it did exist before that, “except for Europe”). (1) and (2) have not applied, thus (3) is irrelevant, out of the question. In

other words, there remains no rational incentive to preempt, although our force structure, planning and posture are totally oriented around this goal.)

Thus, even prior to 1964, it would have been **insane** for a US president to launch a first strike in any circumstances other than strict and unequivocal preemption. That applies to the best-conceived and almost-perfectly-executed first strike or preemption, including a coercive strategy.

But try to imagine circumstances on earth in which the execution of **SIOP-62** (even ignoring its then-unknown likelihood of causing nuclear winter) with its predicted massacre of over six hundred million humans, would have been rational or other than insane, even as a truly preemptive strike. There are none. That definitely includes what Eisenhower and the Joint Chiefs regarded as its most likely and compelling justification, a full-scale Soviet invasion of Europe.

It was regarded by President Eisenhower, when he was briefed on it in 1960, as “frightening, appalling”: yet he endorsed it as the operational plan for general war—which he foresaw being executed in a wide range of circumstances—passed it on to his successor without apology, and congratulated its designers on their “good work.” So did each of the four-star Joint Chiefs of Staff (except, creditably, for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, holder of the Medal of Honor for his command on the beach at Tarawa, David Shoup. QUOTE from Rubel.)

It is hard to imagine or explain how anyone at all (including the president and the Chiefs) could perceive the SIOP-62 planning on which they were briefed as anything but insane, murderous without precedent, criminal, evil, sinful, depraved, psychotic. (What epithet, anathematization would be “too much” or even adequate?)

Since 1962, SIOP planning has included more “options” and “flexibility.” Yet since about 1964 a president would be **insane** to launch a first strike of any design under any circumstances whatever, including preemption. That has not meant, however, that US-initiated general war, or even a deliberate presidential decision to execute the continually-updated operational plans for a first strike, has ever been impossible or even highly unlikely in all reasonably likely circumstances. Is this a paradox? I think it should be accepted as a pair of unarguably valid propositions.

To speak bluntly, it would have been insane, criminal, unprecedentedly immoral, evil, recklessly dangerous (at best), for any of them to have taken such a decision under any circumstances they faced or might have faced; and none of them were clinical psychopaths or criminally insane. Yet circumstances were close or might well have arisen in which more than one of them might have done that. I shall be trying in this book to make that statement plausible, and to explain it.

All presidents have certainly threatened, directed preparations for, and led allies to believe that they would launch a US first strike in response to Soviet conventional aggression in Europe and that they might do so in a number of other contingencies (aside

from preemption). How likely they have been to fulfill such threats or expectations is hard to determine, and has probably varied over different presidents and circumstances. I do not believe they have all been bluffs, or would certainly not lead to US FU or FS even when the president did not initially intend that.

None of this is to say that any of these presidents regarded even the “best” outcome of a preventive war as “acceptable” or **desired** an American first strike. A small number of military officers, particularly in the USAF (notably LeMay) have felt frustrated by this civilian judgment, but their disagreement has not led to open insubordination or to explicit recommendations to abandon this policy and undertake preventive war.

I have suggested that this attitude may, however, be reflected in **the advice they have given and the preparations they have made for US intervention in situations where FU—with a risk of escalation to FS—might become the only alternative to a humiliating defeat.** Many officers who may not strictly have desired a nuclear war, limited or general, have nevertheless been notably willing to **risk** it: more than their civilian leaders, who in turn have been far more willing, secretly, to take this risk than most Americans or other humans.

(Korea, Laos, the Offshore Islands, Berlin, defense of Europe, Iran if necessary, Vietnam, Cuba II; and the sixty-year pursuit of the nuclear arms race.)

The domestic and international politics of the Cold War made political leaders receptive to this military advice for unpromising interventions. But I am suggesting that some of the military pressed this advice—risking nuclear escalation in situations that were fundamentally unfavorable in conventional military terms—because they saw that escalation less negatively, more appropriately risked, than many others did, including their own civilian leadership and still more most Americans.

(The very existence of this military advice—generally kept secret, but susceptible to being leaked—along with the dubious military assurance that it could achieve victory, put great pressure to intervene even on presidents like JFK and LBJ who were privately determined not to follow the advice to the point where they felt it would risk nuclear war. This could mean, from the point of view of the military, presidential choice of a “no-win” policy: as in Laos, Vietnam, Cuba I and Cuba II).

This same attitude, of ambivalence or relative acceptance of nuclear war, was reflected also in recommendations given for US escalations during those conflicts (Vietnam in particular).

And (as I have argued at length above) it may have been reflected in promoting a nuclear posture that maintains and sometimes increases strategic instability: incentives to preempt on both sides, and possibilities for false alarms and unauthorized actions.

Since the end of the Cold War twenty years ago, there has been no strategic rationale for the **threat** of a US first strike, yet the readiness, capability and threat has been maintained

and brought up to date in planning, declaratory policy (more explicit under George W. Bush than ever before, and in no way moderated under Obama) and accurate weaponry, despite its effect of blocking major reductions in nuclear weapons and precluding an effective non-proliferation policy.

To make that threat credible, it has been necessary for at least half a century either to **look** or to **be** insane. The United States has always met that requirement.

Post Cold War situation:

Since the ending of the Cold War in 1989 and of the Soviet Union in 1992, the two Doomsday Machines have remained essentially intact, with fewer warheads operational or on alert but each with far more than enough to cause nuclear winter, ending most life on earth, each subject to possible triggering by false alarm, unauthorized action, or possibly accident, or a presidential or delegated decision to escalate from a limited nuclear exchange.

However, the strategic rationale for maintaining an American damage-limiting, counterforce, disarming first-strike force **in order to shore up the credibility of American FU threats against allies of the Soviet Union—what Joseph Gerson has called “the Deadly Connection” between US regional FU threats and US FS capabilities and threats—has disappeared** along with the Soviet Union and with the failure of Russia to extend a “nuclear umbrella,” Russian Type II deterrence, over any other states.

An exception to this would be if the Ukraine and/or Georgia entered NATO and received the NATO assurance of FU against hypothetical Russian aggression against either of those neighbors. As in the earlier case of NATO vs. the Warsaw Pact, the NATO guarantee would require FU threats against overwhelming Russian forces, and those could be credible only if backed up by a threatened US FS capability against Russia.

That would seem to be reason enough to refrain from accepting Ukraine or Georgia into NATO, but there are strong proponents of this in both parties in Congress, as well as from arms sellers and those who want to see US FS forces maintained. (I presume, that USAF is among these, but I don't know specifically. And civilian militarists, all the usual suspects.)

Given the infeasibility of significantly damage-limiting preemption, and the lack of necessity to back up FU threats against non-existent states under a Russian nuclear umbrella, **there is no longer any strategic rationale at all for a purported US first strike capability against Russia**, which is no longer an adversary at all in the Cold War mold. There are a variety of urgent strategic reasons for abandoning this capability in terms of force structure, planning, deployment, posture, declaratory policy.

One concrete, variously rewarding expression of these would be the **prompt dismantling of our entire land-based ICBM force.** (Except for doctrinal and political inertia, and a variety of narrow, short-sighted special interests, this should have been done more than forty years ago.)

If along with that we greatly reduced the number (and preferably, also yield and accuracy) of operational Trident II warheads that now constitute a disarming threat to Russian land-based ICBMs, **the incentive to preempt on any sort of warning would be essentially eliminated for either side.** Strategic stability would at last have been thoroughly achieved. The possibility of a false alarm or unauthorized action leading to a general exchange would have been eliminated.

Moreover, the reduced numbers of remaining warheads on both sides would be close to precluding the possibility of producing nuclear winter under any circumstances.

Both sides should promptly reduce joint holdings of warheads to preclude nuclear winter by either side or both sides together: that is a minimum, urgent obligation to all nations including their own, and to life on earth. That should have been done when nuclear winter was first established as a possibility, at least twenty years ago, especially after it was confirmed within the last ten years.

Fast, dramatic reductions and restructuring along these lines—in the interest of sanity—along with a no-first-use policy further exemplified by the elimination and dismantling of all US and Russian tactical nuclear weapons, would be essential to an impressive and effective non-proliferation policy.

They would also be a credible basis for good faith negotiations toward a Nuclear Weapons Convention abolishing and outlawing the national possession of nuclear weapons and weapons-grade nuclear material.

Actually, these particular concrete measures are not familiar, individually or as a group, as prescriptions in most recent well-intentioned and well-informed studies of “next steps in arms control or toward abolition.” The latter don’t, as I see it, seem to take adequate account of nuclear winter or the loss of “the deadly connection” as a rationale for first-strike forces, or the long-term but little-recognized infeasibility of damage-limitation.

All these must come to be recognized, I think, and appropriate conclusions drawn—by the DOD, the administration, Congress—if we are to bring US and Russian operational arsenals down to levels that preclude nuclear winter. Or if we are to eliminate the persistence of crisis instability. Or to move in any significant way toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

For political reasons, it is extremely unlikely that any of these steps will be taken, under this administration or the next several.

What is not unlikely, I think, is that the desirability, even necessity, of all of these measures could come to be recognized by nearly all of the “arms control and disarmament community.” That would be a policy consensus going very considerably beyond most of them have been actively promoting up until now.

Would that be worth diddly squat? The broad consensus in this out-of-office community on other useful measures has not meant more than that (except for a moratorium on testing, and restraint on ABM deployment) in the past generation. If anything, the sense of priority and urgency and even awareness about these matters is even less (especially compared to other rivals for attention) than earlier.

Still, that’s what I can contribute to, aiming beyond that: to the dismantlement of the Doomsday Machines, the abolition of nuclear weapons and the delegitimation and effective abolishment of war as a human institution.

END NOTES

i [Aside: Minutes after writing the paragraph above beginning, “A problem, though...,” just now, I happened to see a message from Peter Kuznick (I’m not supposed to be looking at e-mail during my writing mornings), informing me that the Fat Man that destroyed Hiroshima was named after Sidney Greenstreet in the *Maltese Falcon*. I replied, “interesting but what’s the basis for this?” Then I noticed that he had a link, to a memoir by Robert Serber: *Peace & war: reminiscences of a life on the frontiers of science* (Columbia University Press, 1998).

Amazon had a search box for it, and I typed in Fat Man, and got the reference that Serber had given it this name. Then I continued to look at the excerpts following (as I shouldn’t be doing), enough to be horrified—despite all I know about this stuff—by the description of the team’s workaday moods and leisure activities on Tinian and how “great” it was that the drops were a “success”—and then, I came across this paragraph:

Serber letter, August 26, 1945, from Tinian (Parts in brackets and italics are added by Serber in the memoir, p. 116-117)

“Life here has reached the beachcombing level. Nothing to do but eat, sleep, and swim. We all survive pretty well on such an existence.

There’s a prize story about Spaatz’s last visit [“General Carl Spaatz was the general commanding all strategy bombing in the Pacific”]. Baker was showing him some of the works. Spaatz questioned something Baker told him, Baker repeated his explanation, Spaatz said, “You may believe that, but I know what I believe,” turned on his heel, and marched out in military manner. [*A little later I was talking to one of Spaatz’s staff officers and he said, “You know, the General is very unhappy about this development.” I was quite surprised, I thought it would be the opposite. “No,” he said “the General says, ‘Now we’ll only need two or three planes.’” (My bold]*

A little more from Serber: Aug. 7 (Tinian: a day ahead of Washington): The next morning we got the news the mission was a success. Of course, we were overjoyed. We were radioed back the readings from the pressure apparatus that had been dropped with the bomb. Bill Penney and I were sitting in one of the Quonset huts, calculating how big the explosion had been, and we almost had the answer, just on the verge of getting it, when, on the Armed Services Radio, we heard President Truman announce that it had been 20,000 tons—a slight exaggeration but not misleading.

“Aug. 7

Dear Baby: Well we seem to have gotten a pretty good press, despite your misgivings. Here everything went like clockwork—no headaches and just as expected. The place is

all steamed up as you can well imagine. Our boys (not the civilians, but the army) have been taking a lot of kidding from other units, so they are on top of the world right now. Yesterday afternoon the Group had a beer & hot-dog party on the ball field, with a short and good speech from the CO. We had a few days with not too much to do, and managed to go swimming every afternoon (here there are no restrictions on using government cars for anything you please). Then it got hectic again, and we've been rushing round pretty madly, but still get in at least dip in the ocean.

The ocean continues to be marvelous, the sunsets gorgeous, the food OK, and life very exciting.

I hope we may do some good in the direction of shortening the war. I haven't had time to pay much attention to the radio today. What was the reaction like?"

(p. 111-112) "Three days later came the Nagasaki drop. Phil Morrison, Luis Alvarez, and I wrote a letter addressed to Sagane, a Japanese physicist whom we had known in Berkeley. We taped the letter to the pressure cylinder that was to be dropped. A remarkable thing about the Japanese is that, after the letter was recovered and turned over to Japanese Naval Intelligence, since it was addressed to Sagane it was delivered to him. He eventually got it back to Luis Alvarez."

"Headquarters
Atomic bomb command
August 9, 1945

To: Prof. R. Sagane

From: Three of your former scientific colleagues during your stay in the United States.

We are sending this as a personal message to urge that you use your influence as a reputable nuclear physicist, to convince the Japanese General Staff of the terrible consequences which will be suffered by your people if you continue in this war.

You have known for several years that an atomic bomb could be built if a nation were willing to pay the enormous cost of preparing the necessary material. Now that you have seen that we have constructed the production plants, there can be no doubt in your mind that all the output of these factories, working 24 hours a day, will be exploded on your homeland.

Within the space of three weeks, we have proof-fired one bomb in the American desert, exploded one in Hiroshima, and fired the third this morning.

We implore you to confirm these facts to your leaders, and to do your utmost to stop the destruction and waste of life which can only result in the total annihilation of all your cities if continued. **As scientists, we deplore the use to which a beautiful**

discovery has been put, but we can assure you that unless Japan surrenders at once, this rain of atomic bombs will increase manifold in fury.” (Emphasis added)

August 31: Phil [Morrison] brought a copy of Time back from Guam the other day. The boys were all delighted to see radar pushed into the back pages. [*The story of how scientists had played a heroic role in the war effort thanks to the development of radar had been all over the newspapers. Nothing, of course, had been printed about us.*]

(sending to TR 9/9/11 12:36 AM)

9-6-11 Strategic Realities (part of my handwritten notes from 9-4-11 on Explaining Almost Everything)

Reality 1: The Strategic Air Command was designed (by LeMay and Power and their successors) for the purpose of carrying out first-strike against the Soviet Union.

It was a first-strike force (and as Wohlstetter pointed out, thinking this was inadvertent, a mistake, a failure), a first-strike force predominantly, lacking capability to retaliate on a large scale to a well-designed and executed Soviet first strike by the scale and kinds of forces the Air Force estimated did exist or would soon exist.

(The lack of second-strike capability was overstated by AJW, even under these conditions; he assumed that for reliable deterrence, it was necessary to assure the Soviets that our survivable second-strike capability would inflict as many or more deaths as the Soviets suffered in WWII: twenty million or more. (Casualties never counted!))

It was also the case that the Soviets were most unlikely, for Service reasons and traditions, to execute the kind of attack that AJW postulated (though this was not impossible: the Japanese surprised us with innovative tactics for Pearl Harbor, which was the example Roberta and Albert Wohlstetter drew on). Or that it would be carried out perfectly. More important, the Soviets did not in reality have anything like the forces the Air Force and RAND postulated; and this was adequately “known,” by 1959 at least, by the Army and Navy.

On the other hand, even if that high level of second-strike damage (by the US to the SU) were assured, it might not deter the Soviets from a preemptive strike (any more than it would deter SAC) if they believed a US FS was imminent or ongoing! AJW was assuming that there was a level of Assured Destruction so high—perhaps twenty million would be enough, but it might take more—that the Soviets would not preempt even if they were sure they were about to be attacked.

That’s implausible, unfortunately. Whatever the level of Assured Destruction (reliable second-strike damage to the SU by the US), if they saw a big difference between that and the consequences of being struck first by the US—if the expected damage (and balance of residual forces, as the JCS and RAND added in) from a US FS were much greater than the expected damage of being struck first (including “defeat”), their military, at least, would still be motivated to preempt. Thus, the US would not be safe from a Soviet FS triggered by a false alarm of a US strike. The only way to avoid this would be to eliminate Soviet fears of being struck first—avoiding threats, for example (as in NATO)—and eliminating forces that were either vulnerable to, or threatened, Soviet forces. (Leaving, for example, a small force of Polaris with single, relatively small and inaccurate warheads.)

This US posture would not be suited to back up US FU threats by threatening to escalate to a disarming attack as a response to a SU nuclear rejoinder to a limited US nuclear attack. Nor would it be unstable. This last “virtue”—maximum deterrence of Soviet nuclear attack—would be at the cost of the first capability (a prime objective of US force planning, I came to perceive: maintaining a far-flung US hegemony by making FU threats to back up our and our allies’ conventional capability, and making the FU threats credible by backing them with a FS threat).

[A point I made today, Tuesday, September 6, 2011 at lunch with Ray McGovern: If SAC could have exterminated the Soviets with “clean” thermonuclear weapons—the clean weapons that Teller promised within a few years, over fifty years ago—that wouldn’t kill beyond Soviet borders, they would have been glad to use those. But we would have to go to war with the nuclear weapons we have.

Given SAC’s determination to annihilate Russians within cities, Europe, contiguous nations to the east and Japan would be collateral damage, which the JCS were consciously prepared to accept. With nuclear winter, which they didn’t foresee, **the rest of the world would have been (unforeseen) collateral damage.** And since 1983, our plans have accepted that possibility consciously, too. (According to Postol; now?)

Reality 2: **the US has preserved and sometimes increased strategic instability**, by its development and deployment policies, and the arms control proposals it has offered or accepted.

- maintenance of land-based missiles;
- improving accuracy of both land- and sub-based missiles
- intended deployment of Pershing-II
- numbers of Trident II subs
- delegation
- alert
- limits on mutual reductions (proposals and agreements), preserving a floor of 1500 warheads
- failure to address alert in arms control negotiations
- rescinding ABM treaty, efforts to deploy ABM

I believe this maintenance of instability—failure to reduce or eliminate it—is deliberate, having strategic motives, not only inadvertent, a by-product of weapons developments and service motives. It was,

I admit, the link between our FU threats and the need to maintain **unstable FS** forces (whose force can be motivated by fears of being struck first, a desire to preempt) has almost disappeared with the end of the Cold War: **(except for deterrence of Russian attack on Georgia and Ukraine: these have yet to be admitted to NATO)**. No doubt, it is mainly reasons of our political economy, the influence of the MIC and the Air Force, that preserves our large, unstable, land-based forces still, for the last twenty years. (And no doubt, those motives were both necessary and sufficient even in the earlier period, when they had the cover of preserving “the Free World” from the Soviets. Though, keeping Berlin, and keeping an armed Germany within NATO, were strong motives then, also.) The MIC and USAF can claim the need to prepared against the reemergence of a superpower opponent, in Russia or China.

Reality: Our nuclear weapons are in the hands of military commanders who believe (not merely say, they are not bluffing) that under certain circumstances the best use of these weapons—what they ought to order and carry out—is to kill, exterminate, civilian populations on a massive scale.

Others, who deplore the direct, deliberate targeting and extermination of civilians under any circumstances, would still promote the deployment of a large number of weapons which, when used as they would propose or direct, under certain circumstances, would lead inevitably to the deaths of as many civilians as with direct attacks on cities.

The possession of nuclear weapons (especially, thermonuclear weapons) put within the hands of civilian human statesmen—and military commanders—the ability to kill millions of other humans quickly. This capability—which simply did not exist sixty years ago (**Hitler and Stalin did not have it in WWII, nor FDR, nor anyone before them: they were the last Great Power leaders who do NOT have it!**)—is inevitably corrupting of the humans who possess it. (See the Ring of Power in Lord of the Rings?)

Corrupting because it will be used by human leaders: used in threats and in domestic politics (the preparedness to use it); used for “petty” purposes, not (even) confined to “the greatest purposes”—“preservation of national integrity” (World Court), survival. Even the threat of massacre on this scale is deeply corrupting, as Dad pointed out: especially with awareness of the possibility of nuclear winter (but even without it!)

(Would it be legitimate to use more than the threat of this, a bluff, even for such “high” purposes? Are there **any** circumstances under which this massacre would be justified? Cities “per se” have been removed from the target list, but not military targets near or within cities; but who has looked at the “military necessity” for many of these targets that would involve massive “collateral damage” nowadays?

Here's a possible case: **Would it or would it not have been legitimate for the Soviet Union to use nuclear weapons to defeat the Germans—say, before victory at Stalingrad, or to avert the siege of Stalingrad—when faced with possible defeat that would mean massive depopulation: as in Poland? Or, for the Poles, against the Germans?** (In both cases, the Slavs under attack were to be not only occupied but partially exterminated, like the Jews). (How about the North Vietnamese, their population under attack in the Christmas bombing—or much earlier, if Nixon had gotten his way with the JCS: see his tapes!)

Human sophistry: acceptance of “collateral damage,” on however large a scale: supposedly not murderous or criminal, so long as it is “unintended, not desired,” especially if **some** steps are taken to limit it or reduce it, whether or not the actual scale of damage is massive or even increasing.

Example: Gaddafi's alleged, supposed (almost surely exaggerated, an “error,” “false alarm”) intent to massacre in Benghazi is used, thereafter, to justify a virtually unlimited (but uncalculated and unreported) amount of collateral damage by NATO.

Saddam's past massacre of Kurds and Shiites (with our complicity) is justification (along with a purely spurious alleged role in 9-11, killing 3000) for an invasion and occupation that results in uncouned, unreported, massive collateral damage for the next eight years.

Saddam's real massacre, Gaddafi's hypothetical one, is used to justify an unlimited amount of “collateral damage”—with virtually no US criticism, challenge, reporting or public awareness.

Thursday, September 8, 2011
 9:23 AM
 (p. 23, handwritten notes, 9-4-11)

Realities: Secret, unacknowledged, concealed, denied, lied about, generally unappreciated by the public, misunderstood (by public, journalists, scholars, many in government)

1. **Emphasis/focus in SAC/SIOP planning on FS (first strike):** *not* on retaliation to SU FS.
2. **USG goals relying on the credibility of US FU** (first use, of tactical nuclear weapons) in regional conflicts. Hence, on the credibility of US FS, as escalation from a SU nuclear response to US FU against a SU client or ally.
- 3) Political and bureaucratic influence of certain anti-Communist, anti-Russian hawks who **want a US FS** vs. the SU or China, to eliminate them as rivals and destroy their ideology; and want **extermination** of Communists/Russians, and for some, Chinese (as revenge for “loss of China” and Korea; cf. racist and revenge motives for desire, for some, of extermination of Japanese in WWII).
4. A perceived need in USAF to disguise planning for (2) and (3) as “preemptive” for public acceptance. Thus, need to exaggerate the SU FS capability and threat.
5. The **construction and maintenance of instability**, benefiting above goals. (On Soviet side, which did not rely on FU threats (though Khrushchev made some, as bluffs: Suez, Cuba-I, abortively in Cuba-II, Middle East war 1967), this may have resulted simply from imitation of USAF, in pursuit of “parity”).
6. USG tolerance and (perhaps unsought) **promotion of proliferation**: Israel, India, Pakistan, at various times Iran and Iraq, potentially Japan and Germany (in eyes of Rusk, Nixon), unwillingness to accept measures required to discourage it (Gilpatric Report).
7. Contrary to public impression, **absence of:**
 - No-first-use policy (NFU)** (majority of public believes this is--and should be--real policy of US even in Europe, even if aware of threats/ “bluffs”)
 - No-first-strike policy** (public believes that rejection of preventive war means also, rejection of preemption or launch-on-warning and rejection of escalatory FS, as in NATO planning, of which they are unaware)

USG opposition to any and all nuclear proliferation

Maximum and effective, fully enforced controls against unauthorized action

Requirement for presidential authorization for use of nuclear weapons in all circumstances.

8. NEVER true that Type I deterrence—deterrence of SU nuclear attack on the US or US forces was the sole or even primary objective of USAF or SAC;

9. ALWAYS a primary goal of USAF: Large USAF forces and share of budget, modernizing, a large R&D and airframe/missile/engine/electronics industry, superior to any other air force (overall and in capability of individual weapons);

10. And other primary SAC strategic goals:

deterring or responding to SU invasion of Europe (or occupation of Berlin) by capability for a damage-limiting, disarming US FS vs. SU;

11. This SAC capability served USG goals:

Achieving economic “recovery” of Europe (restoring industry, US trade and investment, without left-ward political shift or orientation of trade toward Russia and East Europe) aided especially by rearmament of Germany within context of a divided Europe;

Maintaining US political and economic influence in Europe (as guarantor of its security against (exaggerated) Soviet threat, provider of nuclear “umbrella”;

Maintaining an extended US informal empire, US hegemony up to the borders of the Sino-Soviet Bloc, the “Free World”: with threats of FU backing up US and client conventional forces, these threats backed up (against SU nuclear response) by threat of US FS; (see FU threats in relation to Berlin, Indochina, Korea, Iran, Iraq/Kuwait 1958, Offshore Islands 1955 and 1958, Gulf War, Iraq 2003)

9. **NEVER** an acceptance by the USG that “the only—legitimate, or effective, or rational, or credible--use of nuclear weapons is to deter their use by others, either FS or FU by others.” (Frequent allegation by McNamara after leaving office, by proponents of arms control or disarmament.)

10. (Contrary to common beliefs among the relatively-informed media and scholars), **NEVER** acceptance by USAF/SAC (or collegially, JCS; or in war planning approved by civilian authorities), that:

Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) either exists, or is inevitable or acceptable (or is a basis for war planning);

Damage-limiting in general war is effectively impossible to achieve (say, since mid-Sixties: as appears realistic to me even for a first strike); or only a secondary, limited goal (McNamara, after 1962); or is infeasible in second-strike retaliation;

“FU threats are always incredible, ineffective”;

Carrying out FU threats is too risky under all circumstances

Retaliatory forces are intended to “ride out” a Soviet first strike, responding not to tactical warning but to actual explosions;

Protecting second-strike capabilities by shelters for bombers (Wohlstetter/RAND recommendation)

Foregoing launch-on-warning (LOW)

Foregoing decapitation

11. Strong preference, even determination, to pursue massive city-busting in SU (and China) as high priority (or highest, along with nuclear capabilities) in a US first-strike (especially in the LeMay-Power era: unclear how much this ever changed, despite changing civilian guidance).

12. Strong preference, even determination, **to pursue decapitation** of SU (and Chinese) command and control, in both first-strike and retaliation: despite civilian guidance for permitting coercive strategy by preserving enemy capacity for control and war-ending.

Human and bureaucratic realities:

13. The readiness of human leaders or subordinates to direct or participate in (or protect by silence) the massacre or extermination of humans, “others,” is much greater than most humans suppose.

14. Human concern—of either leaders or “ordinary humans”—to prevent massacre or genocide of “others” is less common and at best much less intense than almost anyone supposes. In particular, this is true of “concern” as measured or demonstrated by willingness to make efforts or to take risks to do so: especially by opposing official or group policy which is directing or tolerating massacre.

Willingness of humans to risk loss of membership in a group, loss of office, damage to image, or risk safety, to expose or resist massacre is much **less** than is generally imagined; for the great majority of office-holders and members of the public, it is close to

non-existent. Thus effective internal (and even external) safeguards or resistance against a hierarchy whose leaders have directed massacre do not exist.

(All this applies as well to policies of torture.)

(Historical examples: massacres, mass purges, genocides or directed famines ordered by Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, Hutus (and Tutsis) in Rwanda and Burundi. Extermination of native Americans. Terror bombing by Japanese and Nazis. Strategic bombing by US and UK in WWII, culminating in firebombing of Japanese cities. Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Massacre of cities resisting surrender, going back to Greeks, Romans, (Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians?), Genghis Khan, Tamerlane ... Reprisals against villages in counter-insurgency campaigns: Romans, Napoleon in Spain, French in Indochina, Algeria, US in Philippines and Vietnam, Japanese in China, Germans in Europe...)

15. Readiness of decision-makers, national leaders, to *risk* social catastrophe to avert or reduce the risk of personal set-back, failure, loss of image, blame, above all loss of office or power, is very much greater than “outsiders” imagine. In the face of otherwise-certain or highly likely **personal** losses or failures in the short-run, leaders commonly, in secret, consciously **gamble with catastrophe**. (On a smaller scale, this also applies to life and death decisions and possible financial ruin by corporate leaders).

The catastrophes in question include massacre, war, even all-out nuclear war, but not only these: see, recently, financial melt-down, depression, climate change and extreme environmental conditions.

16. Likewise, the readiness of subordinates to implement—or to ignore, fail to expose or obstruct or refuse to participate in---policies they perceive to be both hopeless and catastrophic is far greater—very great!—than outsiders can imagine.

The consequence of these realities—human propensities, lack of controls or resistance internal to groups, and general lack of human **awareness** of both, especially respecting “us”—is that massacres and catastrophes come as surprises, “incomprehensible” and unforeseeable, to most observers, and as demonstrating differences between “them” (the perpetrators) and “us” that are actually greatly exaggerated and serve to justify plans or execution of massacres (and torture) against “them.”

Plans for such massacres and genocidal attacks (like US and Soviet nuclear plans and preparations) are easily kept secret, out of public awareness, because occasional leaks (or threats by leaders) are regarded as literally incredible, inconceivable, impossible (or total bluffs). (See the secrecy of Hitler’s Final Solution, even from most Jews in Europe and the Allied leaders and population).

All of this bears on the ability of American and Russian societies to construct Domsday Machines, maintain them for over half a century, without significant internal opposition or controversy (or complaint even within other nations whose existence is threatened by these Machines and threats). Likewise, on the participation of **all** NATO democracies in

the construction and operation of these Machines. And on imitative models of these Machines, on so far a lesser scale than global Doomsday, by each of the eight other nuclear weapons states, with the enthusiastic support in each case of the national population, once their high-tech genocidal capabilities have been unveiled and tested.

Gambles with catastrophe

How to explain the readiness of leaders to gamble with catastrophe, and the willingness of subordinates and knowledgeable members of the public to accept such gambling?

Contrary to the predictable, almost universal explanations given by authorities after a gamble has failed, the decision-making that led to the catastrophe is almost never actually due to:

“No one foresaw the possibility of catastrophe”

“This outcome (catastrophe) was not only not foreseen or imagined as a possibility, it was not foreseeable”

“No one—in particular, no one with any expertise or authority—warned decision-makers that this was possible, let alone likely”

“No one urged or even proposed any measures to avert this catastrophe, or reduce its likelihood”

“There was no way to avert this or reduce its likelihood, even if it had been foreseen”

To repeat: though usually after a catastrophe has occurred some or all of these excuses are asserted, by decision-makers or their defenders anxious to avoid blame, it is almost always (surprisingly) the case that **not one of them is true**.

Rather, on realistic and probing investigation (when this occurs), it almost always turns out that choices that led to or permitted the disaster were chosen despite credible warnings of risk and often despite authoritative recommendations that other choices be made to reduce or avert the risk. Thus, the choices were consciously perceived as gambles. But since that fact would magnify the blame if the warnings and recommendations proved to be sound and the gambles were “lost,” the nature of the decisions as gambles has been kept secret.

The warnings and contrary recommendations are to be kept secret (before and after the event) and denied, if there are accurate guesses or leaks. One, several or all of the above false propositions about the decision-making are quickly asserted in the case of failure. And/or false assertions are made as to who made various decisions, who oversaw them, whether internal communications were accurate or false: all this to protect agency heads or top decision-makers from blame. In many cases, preparations are made beforehand to provide “plausible denial” to CEO’s or presidents.

But why is this secrecy so often necessary? Why are policies chosen (or precautions neglected) so often that would appear to outsiders—or do appear, on exposure-- to be

manifestly imprudent or reckless? When warnings are persistently ignored by apparently rational decision-makers, “fixes” are rejected, or certain “mistakes” are repeated over and over, I have learned to suspect:

a) The decision-maker (D) values some benefit of pursuing this policy more highly – relative to catastrophe—than others are expected to evaluate it. Common benefits to D of this sort are: D keeping office and power; expanding D’s power, achieving promotion; avoiding blame or bad image (loser, incompetent, weakling, unmanly); avoiding prosecution.

b) D privately sees the risk, the probability, of disaster as less than others do.

(E.g. Hitler was right about this in attacking Rhineland, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France; he was wrong about attacking Russia, or declaring war on the US. The neo-cons in the GWB administration foresaw “a cakewalk” in Iraq, contrary to the Army. JFK believed he could control events in Cuba-II. Likewise, LBJ and McNamara may have thought in 1965 that the North was more likely to pull back under bombing than, say, Tom Hughes or Ball or Clifford believed, allowing a sustainable stalemate at levels well below the 1968 deployment.

c) D sees the measures necessary to avert or lower the risk of disaster as “**too costly**” (for his own administration, for society): but this is not to be admitted, so the existence or effectiveness of such measures or the scale of the dangers is to be hidden or denied. (See failure to improve the levees in New Orleans. Or international passivity, led by the US, toward the prospect of catastrophic climate change. Failure in the Cold War to press large programs of civil defense, even by those who planned and foresaw the necessity for first-strikes.)

d) D sees the disaster as less bad—for him, or his party—than others do; he sees some **benefit** in it, perhaps dynamically or dialectically, not necessarily enough to make it desirable but enough for him to be ambivalent about it, less opposed than others are or than they suppose him to be.

(Political examples: the attitude of the Communists in 1933, “After Hitler, us.” Or the prospect of Gore’s defeat by George W. Bush in 2000, for Nader: “teaching Gore and the Democrats a lesson, and strengthening and emboldening the left by confronting a Republican president.” For Republicans in 2011-2012: US double-dip recession, leading to Republican victory in 2012.)

Corporate examples: “bubbles”—S&L, dot-com, housing—from the point of view of the major banks and hedge funds, especially the ones “too big to fail.” (Corporate officers not only escape prosecution but make fortunes during the bubble **and after** it bursts!)

Or with respect to this book: a **US first-strike triggered by a Type II “error,”** a false alarm or unauthorized action: leading to the strategic disarming, defeat and destruction of the SU and China, albeit with great retaliatory damage to West Europe.

Or: A nuclear **arms race** with the SU is seen by USAF, the MIC (especially the aerospace industry and electronics, and eventually the constituencies that benefit from them), and some politicians, as a **good** thing, “good for the USAF” (and Navy), good for “the economy,” in contrast to the fears of the Chicago Manhattan Project scientists and nuclear disarmers that it has a high likelihood of leading to nuclear war, otherwise avoidable.

Neither of these evaluations, or ambivalences, can be admitted to the public or the world at large. To these larger audiences, the arms buildup and the persistent possibility of “error” must be presented as unavoidable, necessary to security, not for reasonable D’s a matter of choice (or potential blame) at all.

At worst, the arms expenditure threatens, from this point of view, to have been an unnecessary investment; “**over-insurance**” (which is feared by USAF and the MIC to the same extent as it is by the insurance industry.) That it might have **provoked** the Soviet buildup of a D

Given ambivalence (at least) toward the Soviet buildup (which is necessary to the US programs, specific weapons or measures that are regarded by critics as provocative are not eschewed but on the contrary favored (even at the cost of increasing the likelihood of SU preemption based on false alarms or escalation).

An apparently exotic but actually influential example of this ambivalence (or even positive attitude) toward all-out nuclear war rests on the fact that many high American military commanders including members of the JCS have been evangelical fundamentalists--“pre-millennial (or post-millennial) dispensationalists who believe in the coming of Armageddon, the rapture and Judgment Day-- along with many members of Congress and several presidents (Harry Truman (!), Reagan (!), possibly George W. Bush. (Carter was an evangelical, but not known to be a fundamentalist).

For some of them, all-out nuclear war is the likely form of Armageddon that is **necessary** to the Second Coming of the Messiah, preceded by the “rapture” of believers into the heavens, from which they will observe the ensuing time of troubles. A great many American voters believe this; but much more importantly, so do a significant number of high-level politicians and military commanders.

To take steps to rule out such war under all circumstances would be, for these budgeters and crisis managers, to postpone the Coming of the Messiah and His reign over earth during the millennium. (Likewise, to obstruct or roll back Israelis from occupation of Greater Israel, another signal and precursor of the Final Days, which will mean the ascendancy of the believers.)

This is no joke.

Oi gevalt. (**That's** a joke.)

Political case: Defining the appropriate response to 9-11 as a Global War on Terror had foreseeable dangers for civil liberties in the US and observance of the Constitution. The dangers were realized (though it can still get worse, and almost surely will with another 9-11). But for Richard Cheney and his aide David Addington, that was entirely advantageous.

They believed in Executive Government (not divided and overlapping powers), with total lack of constraint on the president—at least, in the area of “national and homeland security,” whose scope he alone defined--by the Constitution, laws, treaties, courts or Congress. In other words, a different form of government from the one they swore an oath to support and defend. They achieved this, by covert executive coup, later ratified by Congress, despite some limited opposition by the Court and lower courts.

For some military and some civilians, a **failure** of one or more **FU threats** followed by the implementation of that threat could be **advantageous**: not only to avoid defeat or win victory in a particular case but as a precedent that would greatly increase the credibility and effectiveness of later nuclear threats.

(Kissinger in the Fifties with respect to Korea and Indochina, Kuter during the blockade of Quemoy in 1958, Westmoreland during the siege of Dienbienphu, possibly Nixon with his November ultimatum in 1969 or facing the North Vietnamese offensive in 1972, LeMay on several occasions)

(Perceived absence of) **Conflicts of Interest**

USAF Axiom:

1. What's good for SAC/USAF is good for the US/world.

[This is one instance—of great consequence!—of a general attitude, by every group whose plans and actions need justification, because they are arguably criminal or wrong, even evil, risking or ensuring many deaths, or risking catastrophe, and rely on deception. “This is not **just** for me, or for a narrow ‘us’: it’s also good for others, beyond our narrow team, for whom we also have concern or loyalty.” This generally holds for the Mafia, corporations (“What’s good for GM...”), the USG, any administration/party/candidate, for America, for Israel, for Al Qaeda.)

2. The above holds (for all these groups) because, as in, “What’s good for the US is good for GM, and vice versa” (Charlie Wilson):

There is (supposedly) an identity of interest between the smaller and other/larger group, a harmony, convergence, effective identity of interest (in the practical range of actual experience), no potential for conflict (at least, nearly all the time, as a rule of thumb).

An important case of this: for many or most American Jews: “What’s good for Israel is good for America.”

Thus, blindness to conflict of interest—as perceived by leaders in Israel, and hence, effectively, by most American Jews and Christian Zionists—over the desirability **for the US** of: an Israeli/US attack on Iran; or continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank; US toleration of Israeli nuclear weapons and Israeli human rights violations; and resulting hostility between Arab states and the US.

- 3, For USG, and most Americans: “What’s good for America (as seen by its leaders, candidates for office, elites) is good for the world.”

Actual conflict of interest generally operates by causing a mis-perception of **absence** of potential or actual conflict: a perception or belief in an identity or harmony of interests (that others can perceive as conflicting in particular circumstances).

It’s precisely to avoid this misperception that rules and laws exist to prevent people who are likely to be subject to conflict of interest from appointment to a particular post, or doing so without divesting themselves of assets or associations or obligations that are likely to cause a conflict of interest, whether they perceive it or not. Generally they will not; that’s why the judgment has to be made, or the rules enforced, by others who do not share the same interests.

To repeat: conflict of interest does not generally warp official decision-making because the decision-maker, seeing a conflict, privately values his or her special, private interest over the broader interest which—in terms of the office or role, law, public expectations, perhaps oath of office—is “supposed to be” superior and controlling.

Rather, it operates by convincing the office-holder or oath-taker that the interests are convergent or identical, that there is no necessity to trade-off or compromise or choose one over the other.

Then, whichever interest is easier for the decision-maker to calculate or estimate or predict can be taken as a reliable guide to the other interest as well. Since one—based on one’s past experience or past and present associations—may be more familiar, and “as it happens” more salient to certain other, non-official constituencies—your past employer, to whom you will return, or your immediate boss to whom you are directly answerable in a larger hierarchy, or your Service, agency, your past industry or corporation, your family, your ethnic group—you can (given this perception of convergence of interests) fulfill your responsibilities to the other or larger or nominally superior group by “steering” on what’s good for old/other/more immediate team (on which your immediate fortunes or your future depends.)

Thus, it is not only common, it is practically universal, to do what the Congressional Code of Ethics for Federal Employees (1958) **forbade**: “put loyalty to person, party or government agency” (or past and prospectively future corporate employers) effectively, if not consciously, **above** “loyalty to country and the highest moral principles.”

(The 1958 Code—supposed to be posted in every federal office-- required the reverse order of loyalty. That formula—virtually always violated in practice—was abandoned in later Codes from the mid-Sixties.)